

Testimony: Senate Education Committee
Date: April 26, 2016

My name is Stephenie Jacobson. I am a parent of 4 boys, ages 10 to 5. Currently I homeschool two boys and the other two are in a private school that uses a proven homeschool curriculum and does not administer any state assessments. Our decision to seek out alternatives to public education is the direct result of the state of Michigan adopting the common core standards.

I could spend lots of time telling you:

1. Common core was not state-led, rather the result of plans developed in secret meetings of private trade organizations. It was funded largely by the Bill and Melina Gates Foundation. Most states including Michigan agreed to adopt CCS sight unseen in order to be eligible for grants via Race to the Top and waivers to provisions in No Child Left Behind. States that have tried to backtrack from the CCS are always threatened with a loss of federal funds.
2. That CCS are not benchmarked, nor have they been tested.
3. The federal government has been involved since the inception – providing funding for the NGA, the CCSSO, state longitudinal data bases, and the testing consortia writing the CC aligned tests.
4. The federal department of education illegally modified FERPA (federal education rights and protection act) making the notification of parents about the data collected on their children a best practice instead of law like intended. They also loosened the terms surrounding who that data could be shared with.
5. Several key content experts (notably Sandra Stotsky – ELA and James Milgram-Math) refused to sign off. Since then, parents everywhere have been up in arms about the types of “literature” suggested on CC-aligned reading lists as well as the absolutely befuddling math kids are bringing home.
6. We are told the standards are not a curriculum, but state tests are linked to the standards and teacher performance is linked to the tests. In Cheboygan, my friend’s daughter had 4 new CC-aligned text books last year alone.
7. Many states (most notably Massachusetts whom the authors of SB 826 based their proposed interim standards on) had standards that were benchmarked, proven, and ranked - even by CC supporters - superior to the common core.
8. No one in state government bothered to estimate the cost to implement common core.
9. Most common core supporters including the have been paid via grants from entities like the Bill and Melina Gates Foundation. Everyone who supports common core seems to benefit from it. Companies and their allies like the Chamber of Commerce get “productive workers” and the money to be made off things like data collection, curriculum and teacher development, and student testing. Federal and state departments of education seem to be working together to see their role expand. This, of course, means job security.

But you'd have to live in a bubble not to know all these things. They've been pointed out to you repeatedly and can be confirmed anyone who chooses to do their common core homework.

Now I'd like to share with a personal experience:

Last October, our local school held a common core promoting spaghetti dinner session. For the first time in history, parents were offered free spaghetti dinners so teachers can explain to them how to do basic math with their children. One mom I know was told that the introduction to common core session was "not the time to ask questions" when she inquired as to who wrote the standards. I was told that my question as to the evidence they had of students being "college and career ready" and having a "deeper understanding" of math – math that up until CCS we all understood perfectly well – "would be further discussed with me in private". If you are unsure why the school officials didn't honestly answer any of these parent questions, please reference the first part of my testimony.

In the 4th grade math session, the teacher started by saying that while the students were still struggling with the new math, at least they weren't having as many incidents of "tears and frustration" as they did in the beginning of the year. Funny, in all my years of schooling, I don't remember classroom meltdowns being a regular part of elementary math. Nor do I ever remember a teacher having to tell someone that she would "have to get back to her with an explanation" of the process of dividing 330 by 5 (as happened in our session). The fault is not with the teacher, rather with the way teachers are being told they must teach math.

In conclusion, I thank the members of this committee for allowing me to be here and listening to my testimony. I urge you all to support the passage SB 826. In truth, all I want is to get every single representative in Michigan on the record with a roll call vote on the Common Core Standards. This bill is a chance for the citizens of Michigan to know which legislators really support common core and which do not....something they have not been given up to now. Our children are the most beautiful gift we are given. I think regardless of which side you are on, it's fair to say they will inherit some pretty big problems from us. They deserve the best education we can give them and that has zero to do with the Common Core.